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ILLUMINATING THE **DARKNESS**

LILY CLARISA HENRIQUEZ

Lily Clarisa Henriquez, 28, is a poet/writer, singer and, most importantly, a full-time English teacher at ROC Mondriaan in the Hague. She grew up in Cura Cabay, Aruba and recalls living there as one of the best years of her life. After graduating from high school, Lily took a year off and worked as a waitress at Delifrance to save money and think about what she wanted to study afterwards. After her gap year, Lily decided to become an English Teacher and pursued her study at the Windesheim University of Applied Science in Zwolle, the Netherlands.

- **WHY DID YOU MOVE TO ZWOLLE?**

"Well, I specifically chose Zwolle because of how close it was to my husband's family; I didn't know anything about the Netherlands. The first time I came here was the first time I was on a plane to the Netherlands."

- **HOW DID YOUR LOVE FOR POETRY START?**

"From a very young age, I wasn't able to communicate with anyone else at home; I was in a situation which was difficult to express myself. I always had a pen, a notebook or even just a piece of paper to write on. Even though I wasn't good at writing in English yet, I would just write the way it sounded in my head and that's how I started writing poetry and also lyrics at the same time."

**"I WOULD WRITE ON
ANYTHING, EVEN
TOILET PAPER."**



When Lily started college she attended some poetry workshops and from there on she just fell in love with it, "My teachers gave me so many compliments and they helped me realize that I love it." In the summer of 2014 Lily got married but after just one year of marriage, it came to an end. Her ex-husband started talking back to his ex, whom he still had feelings for, "I was going through a heavy divorce, but we were still living together. Since we have always wanted kids together, we agreed to make 'Lost Love Poems' before the divorce was finalized."

- **WHAT IS LOST LOVE POEMS ABOUT?**

"Part one is about true love; the first time I really fell in love with a guy. The second part is about the relationship with my husband from the beginning until the end. It's about how I felt betrayed by everything that was going on."



"I've also went through a lot of things at a young age and I've realized that a lot of people don't want to talk about it."

The depression and child abuse that is going on in Aruba is what really inspired Lily to start writing part one of *Illuminated Darkness*, "In Aruba, they don't specifically want to talk about child abuse, mental illness, depression, and domestic abuse, especially against women. All of those things are going to be in the illuminated darkness."

- **WHAT MADE YOU MOVE BACK TO THE NETHERLANDS?**

"During my divorce, I just wanted Aruba and my family back. I was very nostalgic, saying things like I will never go back to the Netherlands. Later, I realized that I didn't hate the Netherlands, I hated getting a divorce. I felt that, professionally, I felt more at home in the Netherlands."

Lily had the opportunity to experience what it was like to be a teacher in Aruba. In her experience she states that she had to change who she was to become what the school wanted, "Literally, in my file they wrote that I'm too nice to the kids. How is being nice to kids a bad thing?"

- **WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO DO LOST LOVE POEMS TOGETHER?**

"As we were going through the divorce, we wanted to collaborate. He did the sketches and he approved all of the poems that are in that book and then I published it. That was the end; thank you my dear ex-husband. That was our baby that we were not able to create, but our literary baby. This was definitely my artistic way of closure."

ILLUMINATED DARKNESS...

In 2016 Lily moved back to Aruba to complete her internship as an English teacher at a vocational college. When she was in Aruba, she realized that as a teacher you see so many aspects of the students. Especially the traumatic things they are going through.



Lily has since moved back to the Netherlands, she feels as though in Aruba they kept giving her comments such as, "Oh, you're so young." Meanwhile, in the Netherlands, they look at her resume, her capabilities and her past work-experiences. Currently, Lily is the only English teacher in her department at school,

"They love me and trust me here and I appreciate that so much."

- **WHAT IS THE BEST THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER?**

"I am such an extrovert and I tend to be very social. I love the interaction; I get to talk to students from so many different backgrounds and they teach me a lot of things. The other best thing is when they bring food from their culture - I love free food. For Christmas, I made halal arepas because they didn't know what arepas are but I made it halal since they taught me what halal is. That was really fun, learning from each other's cultures."

- **CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR DOG?**

"John Diggle is my light, he is named after a character in the show 'Arrow'. He is Czech, I got him with the money we received from the wedding. Funny enough, he is in my divorce papers; he's 100% mine. When I am sad, he just comes and licks my face and makes my day. Without him, I don't know what I would do. He just helps, he helps with every aspect. I don't feel so alone. One of my goals for this year is definitely to go to the Czech Republic with him, to go back to his roots."

To conclude, Lily wanted to give a positive message to those who will read her story, *"I hope that people could be nicer to each other. Help a stranger, say good morning, be nice in general. That is definitely one thing that I miss about Aruba, everywhere people would say good morning. Good-morning to your neighbors, to a stranger. Try to say more good things than bad things."*

